

Other types of immunometric assays are the so-called “simultaneous” and “reverse” assays. A simultaneous assay involves a single incubation step wherein the first antibody bound to the solid phase support, the second, detectable antibody and the test sample are added at the same time. After the incubation is completed, the solid phase support is washed to remove unbound proteins. The presence of detectable antibody associated with the solid support is then determined as it would be in a conventional “forward sandwich” assay. The simultaneous assay may also be adapted in a similar manner for the detection of antibodies in a test sample.

The “reverse” assay comprises the stepwise addition of a solution of detectable antibody to the test sample followed by an incubation period and the addition of antibody bound to a solid phase support after an additional incubation period. The solid phase support is washed in conventional fashion to remove unbound protein/antibody complexes and unreacted detectable antibody. The determination of detectable antibody associated with the solid phase support is then determined as in the “simultaneous” and “forward” assays. The reverse assay may also be adapted in a similar manner for the detection of antibodies in a test sample.

The first component of the immunometric assay may be added to nitrocellulose or other solid phase support which is capable of immobilizing proteins. The first component for determining the presence of capsid protein from WNV or other viruses including *Flavivirus* or *Pestivirus* in a test sample is anti-capsid protein antibody, whereas the first component for examining for the presence of anti-capsid protein antibodies in a test sample is capsid protein. By “solid phase support” or “support” is intended any material capable of binding proteins. Well-known solid phase supports include glass, polystyrene, polypropylene, polyethylene, dextran, nylon, amylases, natural and modified celluloses, polyacrylamides, agaroses, and magnetite. The nature of the support can be either soluble to some extent or insoluble for the purposes of the present invention. The support configuration may be spherical, as in a bead, or cylindrical, as in the inside surface of a test tube or the external surface of a rod. Alternatively, the surface may be flat such as a sheet, test strip, etc. Those skilled in the art will know many other suitable “solid phase supports” for binding proteins or will be able to ascertain the same by use of routine experimentation. A preferred solid phase support is a 96-well microtiter plate.

To detect the presence of a protein, in this case either capsid protein or anti-capsid protein antibodies, detectable antibodies, such as anti-capsid protein antibodies or anti-human antibodies, are used. Several methods are well known for the detection of antibodies.

One method in which the antibodies can be detected is by linking the antibodies to an enzyme and subsequently using the antibodies in an enzyme immunoassay (EIA) or enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), such as a capture ELISA. The enzyme, when subsequently exposed to its substrate, reacts with the substrate and generates a chemical moiety which can be detected, for example, by spectrophotometric, fluorometric or visual means. Enzymes which can be used to detectably label antibodies include, but are not limited to malate dehydrogenase, staphylococcal nuclease, delta-5-steroid isomerase, yeast alcohol dehydrogenase, alpha-glycerophosphate dehydrogenase, triose phosphate isomerase, horseradish peroxidase, alkaline phosphatase, asparaginase, glucose oxidase, beta-galactosidase, ribonuclease, urease, catalase, glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase, glucoamylase and acetylcholinesterase. One skilled in the art would readily recognize other enzymes which may also be used.

Another method in which antibodies can be detected is by linking the antibodies to radioactive isotopes for subsequent use in a radioimmunoassay (RIA) (*see, for example, Work, T.S. et al., Laboratory Techniques and Biochemistry in Molecular Biology*, North Holland Publishing Co., NY (1978), which is incorporated herein by reference). The radioactive isotope can be detected by such means as the use of a gamma counter or a scintillation counter or by autoradiography. Isotopes which are particularly useful for the purpose of the present invention are ^3H , ^{125}I , ^{131}I , ^{35}S , and ^{14}C . Preferably ^{125}I is the isotope. One skilled in the art would readily recognize other radioisotopes which may also be used.

It is also possible to label the antibody with a fluorescent compound. When the fluorescent-labeled antibody is exposed to light of the proper wave length, its presence can be detected due to its fluorescence. Among the most commonly used fluorescent labeling compounds are fluorescein isothiocyanate, rhodamine, phycoerythrin, phycocyanin, allophycocyanin, o-phthaldehyde and fluorescamine. One skilled in the art would readily recognize other fluorescent compounds which may also be used.

Antibodies can also be detectably labeled using fluorescence-emitting metals such as ^{152}Eu , or others of the lanthanide series. These metals can be attached to the protein-specific antibody using such metal chelating groups as diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid (DTPA) or ethylenediamine-tetraacetic acid (EDTA). One skilled in the art would readily recognize other fluorescence-emitting metals as well as other metal chelating groups which may also be used.

Antibodies can also be detectably labeled by coupling to a chemiluminescent compound. The presence of the chemiluminescent-labeled antibody is determined by detecting the presence

of luminescence that arises during the course of a chemical reaction. Examples of particularly useful chemiluminescent labeling compounds are luminol, isoluminol, therromatic acridinium ester, imidazole, acridinium salt and oxalate ester. One skilled in the art would readily recognize other chemiluminescent compounds which may also be used.

Likewise, a bioluminescent compound may be used to label antibodies. Bioluminescence is a type of chemiluminescence found in biological systems in which a catalytic protein increases the efficiency of the chemiluminescent reaction. The presence of a bioluminescent protein is determined by detecting the presence of luminescence. Important bioluminescent compounds for purposes of labeling are luciferin, luciferase, and aequorin. One skilled in the art would readily recognize other bioluminescent compounds which may also be used.

Detection of the protein-specific antibody, fragment or derivative may be accomplished by a scintillation counter if, for example, the detectable label is a radioactive gamma emitter. Alternatively, detection may be accomplished by a fluorometer if, for example, the label is a fluorescent material. In the case of an enzyme label, the detection can be accomplished by colorimetric methods which employ a substrate for the enzyme. Detection may also be accomplished by visual comparison of the extent of enzymatic reaction of a substrate in comparison with similarly prepared standards. One skilled in the art would readily recognize other appropriate methods of detection which may also be used.

The binding activity of a given lot of antibodies may be determined according to well known methods. Those skilled in the art will be able to determine operative and optimal assay conditions for each determination by employing routine experimentation.

Positive and negative controls may be performed in which known amounts of protein and no protein, respectively, are added to the assay. One skilled in the art would have the necessary knowledge to perform the appropriate controls. To determine the quantity of capsid protein or anti-capsid protein antibodies in a test sample, the amount of protein detected in the test sample is compared to the amount of protein detected in the positive control. A standard curve is generated from the positive control values and the amount of protein in the test sample is extrapolated from said standard curve. One skilled in the art would have the knowledge to construct a standard curve and extrapolate the value of the test sample.

Test samples include those samples that are obtained from individuals suspected of being infected by WNV or other viruses including *Flavivirus* or *Pestivirus* may consist of blood, cerebral spinal fluid, amniotic fluid, lymph, semen, vaginal fluid or other body fluids. Test